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News release

Ron Sims
King County Executive



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Salmon using newly restored Hamm Creek channel

Coho salmon are using the new, natural estuary and streambed of Hamm Creek, which formerly ran through a roadside ditch and a one-thousand foot long pipe. Migrating salmon and the carcasses of spawned out salmon were found in the creek last week just two months after the three-year, \$3.5 million project was completed.

"This return of the salmon is a major milestone in the life of this much loved creek," said King County Executive Ron Sims. "It shows the open and natural streambed is functioning properly and the salmon that still use this creek recognize their home waters. This is a tremendous success for all the partners and volunteers who transformed this once unhealthy creek into a healthy home for fish and wildlife."

Sims proclaimed King County's contribution to restoring Hamm Creek part of his Earth Legacy program-an ongoing effort to protect and restore the natural environment of our region.

King County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers designed a new two-thousand foot natural channel for Hamm Creek that includes an open ravine, wood and other natural features, 1.5 acres of estuary and three acres of wetlands. The new channel will be easier for adult salmon to return upstream to spawn and should greatly help juvenile salmon survival rates as they head into the Duwamish River and Puget Sound. The wetlands give fish shelter when flows are high. The estuary gives them a place to acclimatize to saltwater. Virtually all Duwamish estuaries have disappeared

The restored section of Hamm Creek is on an easement King County purchased from Seattle City Light where the utility has a substation. The easement is owned by King County as part of its contribution to the Elliott Bay/Duwamish Restoration Program. The Program is a 1991 legal settlement reached by the City of Seattle; the former Metro wastewater agency that is now part of King County; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Washington State Department of Ecology; the Suquamish Tribe and the Muckleshoot Tribe.

Community activist John Beal has been a driving force in restoration of the

South Seattle creek. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers did the actual construction this summer for the project that was funded by a federal grant to King County. People for Puget Sound contracted for replanting the area. Hamm Creek has also been the site of numerous volunteer plantings in recent years.

This project is a major milestone in an approximate two-decade long effort to restore the creek. Upstream of this project, spawning and juvenile salmon habitat was improved under another former Metro project called the Point Rediscovery Habitat Project. Additionally, King County, with leadership from [County Councilmember Dwight Pelz](#), purchased property in ravines to preserve a greenbelt and all of its environmental benefits.

"The success we are seeing in Hamm Creek is hard earned," said Pelz. "We have to pay tribute to the determination of our community volunteers and the partners who stepped forward to make the stream healthy again. This is a perfect example of the complexities and partnerships needed to restore urban streams to health."

For more information on King County's Earth Legacy Program, visit the web site, at <http://your.kingcounty.gov/earthlegacy/>.

Related links:

- ["Meet our August & September Earth Heroes!,"](#) Earth Legacy web site, Sept. 15, 2000
- ["Sims introduces new Earth Legacy measures; honors local Earth Heroes,"](#) King County Executive's news release, Sept. 12, 2000
- ["South Park community celebrates Hamm Creek daylighting,"](#) King County Executive's news release, May 23, 2000
- ["Land agreement will take Hamm Creek out of pipe!,"](#) Department of Natural Resources news release, April 15, 1999
- ["Hamm Creek agreement signed,"](#) King County Executive's news release, May 18, 1999

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